



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mount Rainier National Park
Superintendent's Office

55210 238th Avenue E.
Ashford, WA 98304-9751

360-569-2211 phone
360-569-2169 fax

Mount Rainier National Park News Release

March 26, 2009

For Immediate Release

Contact: Donna Rahier, 360-569-2211, x2301

2009 SPRING OPENING BEGINNING

Even though the calendar says it's officially spring, snow continues to pile up on the slopes of Mount Rainier. Just like the bears and other animals begin their annual ritual of coming out of hibernation, park maintenance crews are beginning the annual ritual of "spring opening". Throughout the park this involves opening up roads that have been completely snowed in since last fall and have 10+ feet of snow accumulation; removal of slides, boulders and rocks and fallen trees from these roads and repairing any damage; shoveling snow from park buildings; reactivating water, sewer and heating systems that have been shut down during the winter; repairing damage from winter's harsh conditions and many other maintenance activities associated with getting the park's public facilities ready for another season of visitation.

The Washington State Department of Transportation also has their spring opening underway on State Routes 123 and 410 through the park.

Snow was a little slow in coming to the higher slopes this winter, but it appears a spring rally is underway. Last year on February 1 Paradise had 177" of snow on the ground; this year 107" were on the ground. On March 15, 2008 Paradise measured 211" (17.5') on the ground; this year 152" (12.5'). Last winter snow continued to accumulate into spring and a cool, wet spring kept it on the ground late into summer. We'll have to wait and see what this spring will bring.

SNOWPLAY AND SNOWSHOE WALKS ENDING FOR SEASON

Mount Rainier Acting Superintendent Randy King advises that the public snow play area at Paradise will close for the season on Sunday, April 5. The area will be staffed through Sunday, March 29, and will remain open but unstaffed March 30 through April 5. Beginning April 6, inner tubing runs will no longer be available as equipment will be redirected to other areas of the park to assist in spring opening.

The ranger-led snow shoe walks will also end on Sunday, March 29.

The new Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center will be open weekends only until May 4, when it will begin 7-day-a-week operations.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

**PROJECTED OPENING DATES FOR PARK ROADS, CAMPGROUNDS, AND OTHER FACILITIES
FOR 2009 ARE LISTED BELOW:**

APRIL

State Route 410/Cayuse Pass	April 24 (tentative)
State Route 123 @ park boundary	April 24 (tentative)

MAY

Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center (7 days/week)	May 4
Paradise Inn	May 15
White River Road to Campground parking lot	May 20
State Route 410/Chinook Pass	May 22
Cougar Rock Campground & Picnic Area (noon)	May 22
Wilderness Information Center – Longmire	May 22
Ohanapecosh Campground (noon)	May 22
Paradise Valley Road	May 22
Ohanapecosh Visitor Center	May 23

JUNE

Paradise Picnic Area	June 19
White River Campground (noon)	June 26
Sunrise Road	June 26

JULY

Mowich Lake Road	July 3
Sunrise Lodge	July 3
Sunrise Visitor Center	July 3

(NOTE: These dates are projected based on current conditions and schedules, but are subject to change.)

PLAN FOR SPRING ROAD REPAIR DELAYS

Severe conditions this winter damaged the road to Paradise. The road damage occurred on Glacier Hill, which is susceptible to avalanches and snow and rock slides, has very narrow shoulders, and is on a steep grade.

If you are traveling between Longmire and Paradise this spring expect up to 20 minute traffic delays along approximately 0.1 miles of roadway. Delays are expected to be minimal until construction repairs begin. Repair work will start when weather and snow conditions permit.

For up-to-date information and conditions, visit the park's web page www.nps.gov/mora or call 360-569-2211 for recorded information.

Businesses in the gateway communities surrounding the park are open daily to accommodate park visitors. Information on these businesses is available on the internet at www.visitrainier.com, www.mt-rainier.com, www.desitnationpackwood.com or www.minerallake.com.

-NPS-